Standard Ịzọn Orthography[1]

Dr Odingowei M. Kwokwo
Department of English and Literary Studies
Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
odingowei@gmail.com

Abstract

Languages are primarily spoken and produced as sound but are usually reduced to written symbols based on conventionally accepted orthographies. This is an indicator of the level of development of a language. Orthographies are important because they enhance and facilitate the discrete representation of sound and meaning in readable symbols. Indeed, research has shown that there exists a positive relationship between language orthographies and acquisition, development and enhancement of literacy. Ịzọn language spoken by the central Ịzọn people of the Nigerian coastline from Bayelsa State in the east to Ondo State in the west has not had a standard orthography that would facilitate the proper documentation of the language primarily due to conflicting dialectal interests. This short research paper addresses the issue of a harmonized or unified Ịzọn orthography that would be applicable to and incorporate all the dialects. The study reveals that all the numerous dialects have a common orthography and recommend a thirty-one (31) letter alphabet that can be used as Standard Ịzọn Orthography.
Keywords*: Standard orthography, Ịzọn language, language development, documentation, standardization.*

Introduction

Researchers from different countries and cultures have shown that there is a positive relationship between language orthographies and acquisition, development and enhancement of literacy (Joshi, 2010). Ịzọn is a language spoken by the central Ịzọn or Ijaw people of the Niger Delta basin of Nigeria. It used to be one of the five (5) languages used in national/federal media in the 1970s and early 1980s along with Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and Fulfulde, but unlike some of these other languages which have become national languages in Nigeria, Ịzọn has lagged behind as an underdeveloped language. Ịzọn is not listed in national and international examinations such as National Examinations Council (NECO), West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the General Certificate of Education (GCE) largely due to its underdeveloped status, which itself is dependent on, or determined by, a standard orthography. The language is, therefore, in dire need of a standard orthography.

There has not been a formal, generally accepted or approved standard Ịzọn orthography. Although Professor Kay Williamson produced the "Ịjọ Orthography" (Ịjọ and Ijaw are anglicized form of Ịzọn), published in 1983 by the National Language Centre, Federal Ministry of Education, Lagos, the work took a broad (omnibus) sense to include the following:

a) the Eastern Ịjọ dialects, i.e. Kalaḅarị, Okrika, Ịḅanị (Bonny) and Nkọrọ.
b) Nembe, to include the real Nembe dialect and the Akassa dialect.
c) Ịzọn or central Ijo including the Southern dialects (including Olodiama), the

[1] This paper is developed from a mimeograph presented at a stakeholders meeting held at the Institute of Niger Delta Studies, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria for the development of Standard Ịzọn Orthography on November 12, 2019 in collaboration with Dr Tony Enyia, a language development consultant who also contributed some significant additions to the paper. Dr Odingowei Kwokwo is Coordinator, Ịzọn Language Programme, Institute of Niger Delta Studies, and Head of Department of English and Literary Studies, Niger Delta University. *†

> Northern dialects (including Kolokuma), and the Western dialects (including Mein).
>
> d) Biseni-Okordia, three small dialects which are a good deal different from each other and from Ịzọn. Although Ịjọ is often referred to as a single language with different dialects, the degree of difference between the groups is really more than dialectal. (Williamson, 1983:16).

Indeed, in the most recent grouping in Williamson and Blench (2000), the languages listed in a – d above are classified as Ịjọid languages.

To prove this, Kalaḅarị and Okrika have been approved by the National Language Centre, Federal Ministry of Education, Lagos, and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), Abuja {vide C.E.W. Jenewari, Kalaḅarị Orthography (1985) and I.E. Ngulube, Okrika Orthography (2011)} as languages of their own in 1985 and 2011, respectively. This loudly accentuated the need to have a Standard Ịzọn Orthography for the central Ịzọn people.

The absence of a standard Ịzọn orthography has greatly militated against the development of written materials in the language. This gap has created room for tangible variations that have continued to manifest in the spellings of words by different writers of the language. The word "pịrịye" (meaning gift) for example, which is commonly used as a name, is variantly spelt as "prịye" and "preye". Similarly, the words "bẹlị" (language) and "gẹ" (to write) are also variantly spelt as "bẹẹlị" and "gẹẹ", respectively. Some of these variations may be dialectal because Ịzọn language has many dialects. However, much of the variations and inconsistencies could be attributed to the absence of a standard orthography. There has also been an uneasy rivalry amongst the dialectal groups in respect of which dialect is to be considered as the standard variety that should form the basis for the standard orthography. In particular, Mein, which belongs to the Western dialect, has vehemently resisted and rejected the use of Kolokuma, the Northern dialect as the general Ịzọn language. The dissent escalated to books written in Kolokuma, which were rejected by the Mein group. The table below shows the dialectal groups in four clusters,

Table 1: The Dialects of Ịzọn

ỊZỌN			
South Western Cluster	North Western Cluster	North Central Cluster	South Central Cluster
Idiwuni Ogulagha Oporoza Arogbo Egbema Olodiama West Furupagha	Tarakiri West Kumbo Kabo Mein Seinbiri Tuomo Operemo	Ekpetiama Gbarain Kolokuma	Apoi Bassan Olodiama East Oporoma Boma Ohiakiri Ogbein Tarakiri East Ikibiri

Adapted from Kwokwo (2012)

Orthography, Kay Williamson (1984) explains in her monograph entitled *Practical Orthography in Nigeria*, refers to "the correct spelling of words; it is the spelling system of a language; it consists of the symbols (alphabet) and the rules that are used in writing the language". The Webster Dictionary defines orthography as the art of writing words with the proper letters according to standard usage. The most basic definition of orthography is that it is a standardized system of writing. It is the collection of rules that scholars and language users conventionally use to visually represent the spoken language. This starts with creating the symbols upon which a written language is built. Many scholars believe that the major type of orthography is alphabetic, in which the visual symbols represent individual sounds of spoken language since letters are symbols of visual representations of sounds in a language. In the case of Ịzọn, the orthography largely follows and corresponds to the phonetic sounds.

Statement of the Problem

As already mentioned above, there has been a controversy regarding which dialect of the Ịzọn language should form the basis for the orthography of the language in general. This is as a result of a tacit intralanguage or dialectal politics among the speakers of different dialects. This competition for recognition as standard variety has been a source of stagnation in standardizing the way the sounds of Ịzọn language are represented in written symbols and otherwise. Consequently, there was not yet a generally accepted standard Ịzọn orthography. This study therefore sets out to formulate a common, generally acceptable standard Ịzọn orthography by harmonizing existing conflicting orthographies of the language proffered in the writings of various scholars of Ịzọn language.

Objective and Purpose of the Study

Based on the dialectal linguistic politics that has militated against the development of a standard Ịzọn orthography, this study intends to demonstrate that, although Ịzọn language has not been well documented through copious writings and scholarship, and in spite of the existence of numerous dialects of the language, the orthography of Ịzọn is not diverse but a unified one. The study will therefore strive to harmonize the diverse orthographies that have emanated from different scholars of Izọn language. The objective and purpose of this study, therefore, is to prescribe a unified standard orthography for Ịzọn language that would be applicable to all the twenty-six (26) dialects in central Ịzọn, and which would form the basis for developing learning materials for primary and post-primary schools as well as for general literacy.

The Orthography of Ịzọn: Existing Literature

The orthography of Ịzọn, as can be deduced from the definitions in the introduction above, therefore, consists of the symbols (alphabet) and the rules that are used in writing the language. This study relies on a number of books, monographs and pamphlets by scholars of Izọn language to make deductions. These scholars/writers belong to different dialectal

backgrounds. The emphasis on dialectal variations is important in this study because of the controversy over which dialect should form the basis for the general orthography. The major contention, as stated earlier, tends to be between the Mein dialect, which has the largest population of speakers, and the Kolokuma dialect which has been most documented. My contention is that the dialectal differences play little part in determining the standard Ịzọn orthography.

In fact, from research, it is observed that dialectal variations are mainly inflectional and lexical but not orthographical. Indeed, the orthography of Izọn has been proffered by different Izọn scholars in their various writings and publications. The first indication of Izọn orthography is contained in a primer entitled *Ịzọn bịbị go* credited to the Ịzọn Language Committee (1988). It was published under the Rivers Readers Project coordinated by late Professor Kay Williamson, a renowned linguist of the University of Port Harcourt and the (Old) Rivers State Ministry of Education. According to the authors, "this primer is the first book written in Standard Ịzọn. It was compiled by the Ịzọn Language Committee, which was composed of representatives of all parts of the Ịzọn community". The orthography used in this pamphlet is as follows:

Vowels

a e ẹ I ị o ọ u ụ

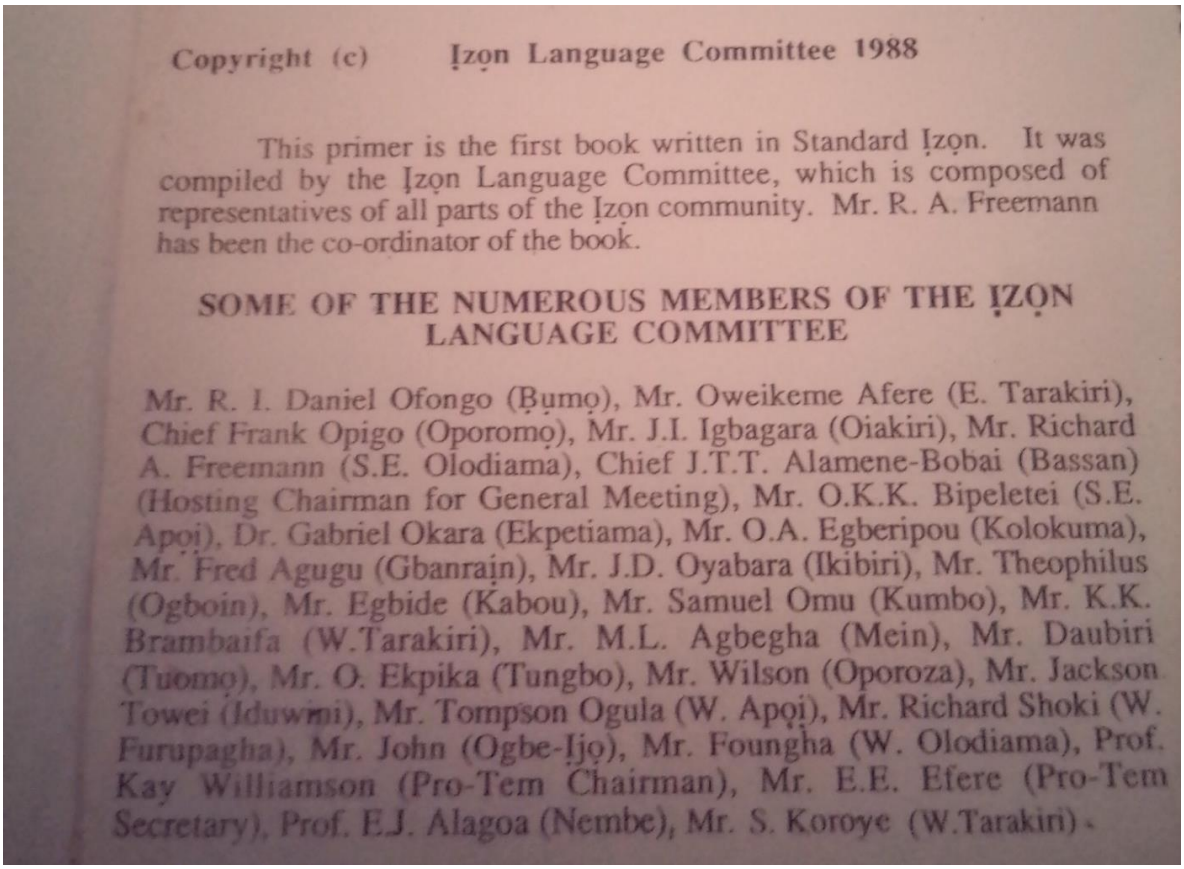
Consonants

b d f g k l m n p r
s t v w y z

Digraphs/Trigraph

gb kp gh ngh

The credibility of the Ịzọn Readers hinges on the numerous, eminent personalities that were members of the Ịzọn Language Committee drawn from all dialectal groups of the Ịzọn nation, which is reproduced here.



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This primer is the first book written in Standard Ịzọn. It was compiled by the Ịzọn Language Committee, which is composed of representatives of all parts of the Ịzọn community. Mr. R. A. Freemann has been the co-ordinator of the book.

SOME OF THE NUMEROUS MEMBERS OF THE ỊZỌN LANGUAGE COMMITTEE

Mr. R. I. Daniel Ofongo (Bụmọ), Mr. Oweikeme Afere (E. Tarakiri), Chief Frank Opigo (Oporomọ), Mr. J.I. Igbagara (Oiakiri), Mr. Richard A. Freemann (S.E. Olodiama), Chief J.T.T. Alamene-Bobai (Bassan) (Hosting Chairman for General Meeting), Mr. O.K.K. Bipeletei (S.E. Apọi), Dr. Gabriel Okara (Ekpetiama), Mr. O.A. Egberipou (Kolokuma), Mr. Fred Agugu (Gbanraịn), Mr. J.D. Oyabara (Ikibiri), Mr. Theophilus (Ogboin), Mr. Egbide (Kabou), Mr. Samuel Omu (Kumbo), Mr. K.K. Brambaifa (W.Tarakiri), Mr. M.L. Agbegha (Mein), Mr. Daubiri (Tuomọ), Mr. O. Ekpika (Tungbo), Mr. Wilson (Oporoza), Mr. Jackson Towei (Iduwini), Mr. Tompson Ogula (W. Apọi), Mr. Richard Shoki (W. Furupagha), Mr. John (Ogbe-Ijọ), Mr. Foungha (W. Olodiama), Prof. Kay Williamson (Pro-Tem Chairman), Mr. E.E. Efere (Pro-Tem Secretary), Prof. E.J. Alagoa (Nembe), Mr. S. Koroye (W.Tarakiri).

Agbegha (1996) used the following orthography in his *Izọn-English Dictionary.* Agbegha speaks Mein dialect of Izọn.

a	b	d	e	ẹ	f	g	h	i	ị	j
k	l	m	n	o	ọ	p	r	s	t	u
ụ	v	w	y	z						

He included the letter ‘j’, three (3) digraphs namely, gb, gh, and kp, and a trigraph, ngh but did not reckon with the digraph ‘ng’. This is very significant in the Ịzọn standardization process.

The Institute of Niger Delta Studies (INDS) - formerly, Centre for Niger Delta Studies (CNDS) of the Niger Delta University (NDU) has consistently used a similar orthography as the Mein (not necessarily because some other writers in Mein do not use the ‘j’) in writing textbooks for primary and secondary schools. The books are first written in Kolokuma dialect and translated into other languages in Bayelsa State, namely, Nembe, Epie and Ogbia as well as the Mein dialect of Ịzọn. This is the orthography the research institute adopts as spelt out in its (2016) publication, *Ịzọn Go Fun: Kala Sẹkọndiri 1.*

a	b	d	e	ẹ	f	g	h	i	ị	j
k	l	m	n	o	ọ	p	r	s	t	u
ụ	v	w	y	z						

The Institute used five (5) digraphs and also included 'j' like Mein, which are:

gb gh kp ng ngh

Please note that the letter 'j' in Ịzọn orthography actually comes from Arogbo, the Ịzọn people close to the Yoruba in Western Nigeria.

In a pamphlet entitled *Ịzọn names and their meanings,* Evilewuru (2006) used an orthography which he called *"a writing and pronunciation guide",* which consists of twenty six (26) letters whereas Agbegha (1996) and the Institute of Niger Delta Studies (2016) used twenty seven (27) letters. Evilewuru avoided the letter 'j', understandably.

a b d e ẹ f g h i ị -
k l m n o ọ p r s t u
ụ v w y z

Although credit needs to be given to Evilewuru for not just providing the alphabet but also providing the manner of writing words/names including hyphenations, he was unable to provide the diagraphs. Evilewuru is a Mein speaker. Another Ịzọn writer, Tamuno (2010) published a pamphlet entitled *Ịzọn Bẹẹli Pọọn mọ Tolumọngị Bara* in which he also provided an alphabet or orthography. He also avoided the letter 'j', understandably also, like Evilewuru but included four (4) digraphs and one trigraph. Tamuno speaks the Kolokuma dialect of Ịzọn.

a b d e ẹ f g gb gh i ị
k kp l m n ng ngh o ọ p r
s t u ụ v w y z (30)

Enieketin C. Enewane (2015:13, 25) provides a glimpse of his idea of the orthography of Ịzọn in his work: *An Introduction to Ịzọn Phonology.* He used twenty-five (25) letters and four diagraphs. Enewane speaks Kumbo dialect of Ịzọn, and like Tamuno he does not include 'j'.

a b d e ẹ f g gb gh i ị
k kp l m n ng o ọ p r s
t u ụ v w y z (29)

Kwokwo (2012) in his PhD Thesis entitled "A Morphosyntactic Investigation of Functional Categories in English and Ịzọn" adopted Williamson (1969) and Agbegha (1996) orthographies of thirty letters.

a b d e ẹ f g gb gh h i ị k kp l
m n ng o ọ p r s t u ụ v w y z

Consonants: b d f g h k l m n p r s t v w y z

Digraphs: gb kp gh ng

Vowels: a e ẹ i ị o ọ u ụ

Another significant contribution to the development of Izọn orthography is contained in a (2011) monograph credited to Agbagha, Prezi, Kemeikiou and Prezi on "A Unified Standard Orthography for the Ịjọ Language Cluster (Nigeria)" sponsored by The Centre for Advanced Studies of Societies (CASA) and The Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC). It contains nine vowels, seven consonants and five digraphs and one trigraph. The letters 'j' and 'ng' are not reckoned with in this orthography but the authors included 'ngh', and 'dz'.

In all these orthographies, only Tamuno (2010), INDS (2016) and Agbegha *et al* included the trigraph 'ngh' which is observable in such words as 'Woyenghi' (God), 'denghi' (which), '-nghimi' (future tense morpheme), etc. It must be noted, however, that in adopting the trigraph as part of the orthography, the Institute of Niger Delta Studies (formerly CNDS) resolved that the digraph 'ng' and the trigraph 'ngh' could be used in the same distribution interchangeably.

Discussion and Findings

A careful analysis of all the orthographies reviewed above reveals that there are really no diverse orthographies in Ịzọn language. The areas of divergence among various scholars have been the inclusion or non-inclusion of the letter 'j', 'ng' and ngh'. 'J' has never been originally part of the phonetics and phonology of Ịzọn language, and as such not been part of Ịzọn writing symbols. Its inclusion now has been necessitated by the influence of English words and other languages including Yoruba. The Arogbo Ịzọn dialect of the South-Western cluster has been greatly influenced by the Yoruba language so much so that they now use the letter 'j' pervasively, which previously was approximated with 'z'. The New Testament Bible written in Kolokuma dialect entitled *Ebi Egberi Bi* (2011) and published by the Bible Society of Nigeria and the British and Foreign Bible Society, London confirms this argument as it does not also use 'ngh' but only 'ng'. The 'dz' which Agbegha et al (ibid) added in their orthography cannot reasonably be used because it is more or less a phonetic symbol and not an orthographical representation.

In spite of the variations, and in view of the similarities in the orthographies of the various scholars who are of different dialectal backgrounds, I argue that all the numerous dialects have a common orthography. Professor B. Okaba (2006) reiterated this view in a paper he delivered in London entitled "Use Ijaw Language and Culture or Lose it" on the occasion of the Isaac Boro Day celebration that "… luckily (sic) enough, there exists a common orthography for quite (large) number of our dialects". Therefore, there ought not to be any controversy regarding which dialect should be used to develop orthography for Ịzọn. The one the Institute of Niger Delta Studies (INDS) has developed would seem to be adequate in representing the sounds of the language in writing. Fortunately, many of the names mentioned in this paper participated in the process as members of the Institute's Editorial Board regarding the development of textbooks in Ịzọn Language. Some of them are also facilitators in the Diploma in Ịzọn Language programme being run in the Institute of Niger Delta Studies of the Niger Delta University.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings that there is no substantial diversity in the Ịzọn orthography, and further based on consultations with linguists, it is recommended that the following orthography should be adopted as the Standard Orthography of Ịzọn Language. This orthography has a total of thirty-one letters: nine (9) pure vowels (made up of 5 wide vowels and 4 narrow vowels), seventeen (17) consonants, four (4) digrapghs and one (1) trigraph. It is as follows:

a	b	d	e	ẹ	f	g	gb	gh	i	ị
j	k	kp	l	m	n	ng	ngh	o	ọ	p
r	s	t	u	ụ	v	w	y	z		

(31)

This thirty-one (31) letter orthography would hopefully be an adequate representation of the various dialects of the Ịzọn language, going forward. Each letter in the orthography is shown in a word followed by a sentence in Ịzọn and translated into English language in the following examples:

a =	aba	=	Aba indi ere	=	Aba is a name of a fish.
b =	buboru	=	Erein buboru ladọụ	=	The day is in the evening.
d =	edede	=	Edede katị nị Ị pịrị	=	Pluck a flower for me.
e =	eri	=	Eri boyemi	=	He is coming.
ẹ =	ẹrẹ	=	Inè ẹrẹ bị Tarị	=	My name is Tarị.
f =	fụụ	=	Fụlọụ fụụ tụa	=	Put salt in the soup.
g =	gẹẹ	=	Ịsọmụ gẹẹ nị a yarị	=	Write a letter to her.
gb=	gbanaịn	=	Kịmịsẹ gbanaịnmị?	=	Did everybody agree?
gh=	isaghai	=	Bei opu isaghai tịn	=	This is a big cotton-tree.
i =	kime	=	Kime tịn bị fọụ koromọmị	=	The storm felled the tree.
ị =	ịgba	=	Ịgba bị akị fịnịmọ kaka	=	Tie the firewood with the rope.
j =	Jọnị	=	Jọnị Jesu tuduo-owei	=	John is a disciple of Jesus.
k =	kịlọkị	=	kịlọkị bọ ifie dii ni Ị pịrị	=	Check the time on the clock for me.
kp=	kpei	=	Warị bị kpei dọụ	=	The house has gathered.
l =	alala	=	Araụ alalamọ sụrụyemi	=	She is washing the plates.
m =	mọụn	=	Mọụn naa wò kọrịgha	=	We are not hungry yet.
n =	nóun	=	Nóun aki bịdẹ kị gbeinyemi	=	Needle is used to sew clothes .
ng =	gbangi	=	Ina bẹlẹ bị na gbangị bọ gbanadọụ	=	Mother has placed the pot on the tripod.
ngh =	Woyenghi	=	Woyenghi kị ọkpọ tẹmẹmị	=	It was God who created the world.
o =	owou	=	Owouama fịnị duo paboyemi	=	Smoke is coming out from the fire.
ọ =	ọwọụ	=	Ọwọụmọ bọmọ zoru	=	Allow the children to play.
p =	pulou	=	Pulou bi akị fịyaị kị tụọfịyemi	=	Oil is used for cooking.
r =	ororo	=	Tọbọụ ororo bị koromi	=	The child fell into the stream.
s =	saraụ	=	Woni saraụ fẹẹnghimi	=	We will have to buy a funnel.
t =	torụ	=	Ebibara nị iné torụmọ dii	=	Take good care of your eyes.
u =	turu	=	Ebi turu fẹẹ ghọ muti'mi	=	Ebi was going to buy nails.
ụ =	ụrụka	=	Yei ụrụka na taa pịrịmị	=	The husband gave a ring to his wife.
v =	vigivigi	=	Kịmị vigivigi nị wò wẹnịbọmị	=	Somebody hurriedly walked passed us.
w=	warị	=	Àrị warị kọrịdọụ-a?	=	Have you built a house?
y =	yọwẹị	=	Bei dada yọwẹị	=	This is (my) father's paddle.

z = zongo = Zongo bị akị mu beni zuubo = Go and fetch water with the jug.

We need to note, however that the Ịzọn language does not have or possess the dental fricative sounds /θ/ and /ð/, the palate-alveolar fricatives /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ and the palate-alveolar affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. In fact, the language has not found a way of domesticating these sounds and so they are still being approximated. For instance, /θ/ and /ð/ are approximated to the plosives /t/ and /d/ respectively; /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ are approximated to the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ while /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are approximated to the voiced alveolar fricative /z/. This point is important because, as was stated in Section 1.0 (i.e. the Introduction) of this paper, the orthography of Ịzọn is based on the phonetic sounds. Consequently, English words containing these sounds are usually approximated by Ịzọn speakers to available sounds in Ịzọn.

SAMPLE TEXT IN ỊZỌN USING THE PRESCRIBED STANDARD ỊZỌN ORTHOGRAPHY

AGBOGIDI MỌ OGIDIKPE MỌ ANDA

Kẹnị aladẹị ifie bi, kẹnị anda olotu Opoku ibe ghọ tiimi. Bei olotu bị ẹrẹ bị Agbogidi. Enịa bei Agbogidi bi Ịzọn ibe sẹ kọ urou payemi. Eri Ịzọn ibe sẹ anda bẹịndọụ; uroupatimi olotu mọ sẹ eri mọ koromọdọụ. Ẹnịa Agbogidi kịmịmọ sẹ koromọsindẹị nị olotu sụọtimi bo kẹnị kụraị layemi bi, manị ụ mọmọ andanghị kịmị fa bịmẹịnị eri uge tịịnmị. Uge teinghi erein baị bị, eri kọkọ wó ibe otumọ tịịkpedẹịnị koro nị uge teimi. Fiyaị mọ wuru mọ zorutiri bọ bein. Ezemọ mọ dumamọ mọ fiesei bo kịmị-mọ sịdịmọdọụ. Ọrọ̀ kẹnị duma gba amẹẹ Agbogidi kala indiọwọụ-mọ sẹ gbọlụmịnịsindọụ ayo. Anda duma-ama kpọ túnyemi. Bei kẹnị:

Daụ-o, yenghi-o, Ị̀ bodọ'wo
Pu bọ daadi
Daụ-o, yenghi-o, Ị̀ bodọ'wo
Pu bọ daadi
Aán eeh, daụ-o, yenghi-o, Ị̀ bodọ'wo
Pu bọ daadi

Ò̀mịnị sẹịtimi bo kẹnị seri layemi bi, kẹnị kịmị nị Opuziba mọ tinyemi oweikịmị wẹnị bo yọ bi lamị. Opuziba kpọ kẹnị anda olotu. Eri Gbarain kịmị. Eri kpọ Agbogidi pịrị koromodọụ. Wo koro bi orukumọ ụ dọnyemi. Eri wẹnị mu zorutiri ladẹịnị Agbogidi tịn doroumi:

"Agbogidi-o! Agbogidi! Ị bei teiyemi uge bi, Ị mu Gbarain ibe kpọ dengimodou-á? Ị mu Gbarain ibe olotu koromo dẹịkọ bo uge teiyemi? Gbarain ibe kẹnị anda olotu emi-ó. Ị-ye ụ kpọ koromodọụ-á?"

Opuziba maseri naa Agbogidi tịịn gbamị. Agbogidi Opuziba gba egberi nadẹịni eze-mọ pẹlẹmọmị. Eri waị nị bei gbayemi owei bi dii-ya, wo kẹnị seri koromọdẹị Opuziba. Wo bolou bi ụka; eri bolou kọọn kụmọmọmi. Indẹịnị, eri Opuziba biimi: "Opuziba, ari gba amẹẹ tekiye (teyeki-é)?"

Opuziba ụ paraịmị: "Àrị gba amẹẹ Ị mu Gbarain ibe anda olotu kpọ koromo dẹịkọ bo bei uge bi teiyem'a-ó? Mọ kpọ àri biiyemi. Gbarain bolou ị-mọ sụọdọụ aba, Koro bi kẹnị anda olotu emi. Kimi nanị ụ koromọgha. Ị-ye ụ kpọ koromodọụ-á?" Agbogidi ma bolouịmbẹlẹgha. Wó bolou kónmị. Eri tịẹ zóo timidẹịni, ụ waị Opuziba biimi:

"Opuziba! Ị bei gbayemi olotu bi teye kị wo ẹrẹ-ó?"
"Wó ẹrẹ bi Ogidikpe kị tịnmị", Opuziba ụ paraịmị. "Perelayefa kị wó daụ ẹrẹ. Perelayefa mọ Ikpedegha mọ tọbọụ: Daụ bi fịdọụ. Bei bọdẹị kụraị kọ daụ bi fịmị. Ogidikpe kụrọnimi bara bi árị Agbogidi ụ koromọgha aba, árị nani olotu ni ịnéọngọ tịnkụmọ. Árị nanị olotugha."

Bei Ogidikpe egberi nadẹị bị, Agbogidi ma kụrẹị wó uge bi naa bọlọụ teimogha. Opuziba ịkasatụa Ogidikpe kuro bi gba uwoumọ ni Agbogidi ọwẹịmọnghị bara kị gbamị. Egberi bi kọkọ Agbogidi ongo duo pusụọmị,

ẹnịnị erị tịẹkiri wó zoru tịẹmọmi, Eri tịẹkiri ma pusaịdẹị ni gba amẹẹ tọrụ bọ emi kala indimọ sẹ eri mọ gbọlụmịnịsindọụ kị tọnwẹrị-ya kẹnị kọọdọụ-e gbadẹị bi, eri mu ni Ogidikpe kpọ gbọlụminịnghimi ayo. Ụ paki vigivigi zorutiri duo wẹnitẹị warị ghọ mumi, tubi, eri ma bolouịnbẹlẹgha.

Bisa bai duo mu bi, eri Ogidikpe mọ anda biinghi bara ni wó ịkịọụ ghọ gbunumi. Ye bi ụ dọnyemi bịmẹịni eri wẹrị ni alamọgha bara ghọ anda ịsọmụfún gẹẹdẹịnị fịrịmọ Ogidikpe yarimị. Ịsọmụ otumọ ma kimi.

Agbogidi ịsọmụ otumọ wó isọmụfún mọ yọụmu Koro la baị bị Ogidikpe ama ghọ faa. Gba bara bi, eri wó ikiaowei mọ Ọkọloba ghọ ere nana ghọ munimi. Wó ikiaowei ẹrẹ bị Uguberi. Bei kịmị bị ọngọ ozún bi meremere dẹịnị eri ma bụụ kpọ tịẹmị. Mẹnị wó bụọmọ gbeleinimi. Eri kpọ andayemi kịmị, ẹnịkọ ụ mọ Ogidikpe ikia nimi.

Enị seri bị, ọkpó nimiwonimi bara bị, gbololo ụwọụama fa. Enịnị ọmịnị tọrụ ki duo yọụ mumi. Orò mu bi bemi tara dein kpọ baịdọụ. Agbogidi ịsọmụ otu kpọ oru beni kụrọ kịmịama bịmẹịnị, ifie famọụgha bara yọụ nị Okoloba ghọ mumi. Ọmịnị bụọ duo wẹnị mu Polalu ladẹị kọ tọrụarụ yọụmị. Ọmịnị pekei duo koro dụsụ mu Okoloba la seri bi, erein fadọụ. Ọ paki orò yọwẹịmọ akịdẹịnị pọụ duo uwou bo ogbo ghọ gbanain dẹịni Ogidikpe nị ere nana ghọ munimi pele bi dọụmị. Ọ doumu ni Odonani biri la bi, kịmị uge teiyemi pele tọnmọ ni ọ dịamị. Ọ paki wẹnị mu warị la dẹịnị Ogidikpe dọụ ni ẹrịmị. indẹịni ọmịnị Agbogidi anda bii ịsọmụ-fun bi koromọ nị ụ pịrịmị.

Ogidikpe bei anda ịsọmụfún bị nana deibi tịbịbiri wó ghọ seimị, wó ọngọ kpọ seri girigiri kị sẹịmị; anda tẹmẹ bo wó ghọ sụọmi. Eri tiekiri gbanain kpọ dọụmị, inda kụrẹị gbanainghi bara fa. Anda bị ụ dịsẹnịmi, inda eri la ni andanghi bara fa, tu bi wó yenghi wó anda tin-tẹri wonimi. Eri anda bọwẹị ni IIkpedegha biẹ́n tịịn nị ụ teri wonimi. Izon otu gba amẹẹ ọkụrụ ganghain nanabọ dẹnghighan, ẹnịnị eri kụrẹị ara tịbị desi beinghan fanghimi. Ẹni bịmẹịnị wó ịkịọụ bị kịrịgha nị eri kụrẹị Agbogidi anda bị gbanainghị barafa. Eri paki gba wó ikiaowei piri amẹẹ ọmịnị ama ghọ mu ladọụ-é, Wó ikiaowei kpọ gbanainmị. Dein korodọụ bịmẹịnị ọ̀mịnị bụnụtimi baịmi.

TRANSLATION OF SAMPLE TEXT IN ENGLISH
THE WRESTLING CONTEST BETWEEN AGBOGIDI AND OGIDIKPE
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A long time ago, there was a wrestling champion in Opoku clan. The name of this champion was Agbogidi. His fame is heard all over Ịzọn Ibe (i.e. Ịzọn nation). He has wrestled and defeated many champions all over Ịzọn Ibe. After being the undisputed champion for some years, there was nobody to challenge him again. Therefore, he decided to celebrate. When the day of the celebration came, he gathered the people of his clan and they began to celebrate. There was plenty of food and drinks for the people. The drumming and singing intoxicated everybody. One of the songs they sang says that: 'Agbogidi has swallowed all the small fishes'.

They sang many wrestling songs. This is one of them:

Standard Ịzọn	**English Translation**
Daụ-o, yenghi-o, Ị̀ bodọ'wo	*Fathers, mothers, I have come*
Pu bọ daadi	*Who dares, let him try (me)*
Daụ-o, yenghi-o, Ị̀ bodọ'wo	*Fathers, mothers, I have come*
Pu bọ daadi	*Who dares let him try (me)*
Aán eeh, daụ-o, yenghi-o, Ị̀ bodọ'wo	*Fathers, mothers, I have come*
Pu bọ daadi	*Who dares, let him try (me)*

As they were celebrating, singing and dancing, one man called Opuziba came to the place. Opuziba is also a wrestling champion. He hails from Gbarain clan. He has also been defeated by Agbogidi. This defeat has been painful and has hunted him for long. He walked up to the arena and called out to Agbogidi:

"Agbogidi-o! Agbogidi! This feasting celebration you have thrown, have you also defeated the wrestling champion of Gbarain clan? Go and defeat the Gbarain Ibe (i.e. Gbarain clan) champion before you come and celebrate. There is a wrestling champion in Gbarain clan; have you defeated him also?" Opuziba called out to Agbogidi and repeated the same statement twice. Agbogidi heard what Opuziba said and stopped the merriment. When he looked closely to know who was shouting to him, he realized that it was Opuziba, a man he had defeated also. His mind was bitter; he was angry. So he asked Opuziba: "Opuziba, what did you say?" Opuziba

replied: "I said you should go and defeat the champion of Gbarain Ibe before you come to celebrate. And I am still saying that when you go to Gbarain Ibe, there is a wrestling champion in Koro. No champion has defeated him in a wrestling contest. Have you defeated him also?"

Agbogidi was no longer happy. His mind was bitter. He stood mortified and humiliated for a while and asked Opuziba: "Opuziba! This champion you are talking about, what is his name?" "His name is Ogidikpe", Opuziba replied. His father's name is Perelayefa. His father has died. His father died last year. Ogidikpe has so much wrestling prowess that if you have not conquered him, you should not call yourself a champion."

After hearing about Ogidikpe's championship, Agbogidi did not have the courage and joy to continue the festivity. Opuziba deliberately exaggerated the prowess of Ogidikpe in order to frighten Agbogidi. The information scared him to the marrows so he immediate stopped the merriment. He vowed that he thought he has succeeded in swallowing all the fishes but since there is still one left, he was going to swallow Ogidikpe also. He hurriedly left the arena of the festivity because he was not happy anymore. From that day forward, he only thought of how to challenge Ogidikpe to a contest. Because knowing about Ogidikpe angered him so much, he sent a message of challenge to Ogidikpe through some messengers. The messengers were two.

When the messengers from Agbogidi arrived Koro with his message, Ogidikpe was not at home. They learnt that he accompanied his friend to Okoloba for a marriage. His friend's name is Uguberi. This man was fair in complexion and has a tall frame, but he has knock-knees. He was also a wrestler, and that was why he and Ogidikpe were friends. In those days, as you know, there were no good roads. Therefore, they travelled by canoes on rivers. Ogidikpe and his friend had already spent three days at Okoloba.

Agbogidi's messengers were strong men so they did not waste time at Koro and headed for Okoloba. They trekked along a foot path from Koro to Polalu and then continued the journey to Okoloba by canoe upstream the River Nun. They journeyed the whole day and arrived Okoloba in the evening. They moored their canoe, took their paddles and climbed up to the community and enquired of the compound Ogidikpe and his friends marriage party was. They searched to Ododanibiri where someone directed them to the compound where the marriage had been taking place. They got to the house and found out Ogidikpe. They delivered Agbogidi's message of wrestling challenge.

When Ogidikpe got Agbogidi's challenge, he was excited and *his body shook* a bit. The thought of wrestling thrilled him tremendously. He wanted to accept the challenge immediately but he couldn't. He liked to wrestle but right now, he could not because his mother had placed a vow against his wrestling. His mother placed a vow against him because of his dangerous exploits in wrestling. He could not violate her vow because the "okro" (okra in English) plant can never be taller than the planter. As a result, his mind was not settled, and he could not respond to Agbogidi positively. He told his friend that it was time for them to go home. His friend agreed. They would spend the night till following morning.

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